

Hell On Wheels by deardmvz

Category: Stranger Things (TV 2016)

Genre: Billy Hargrove Being an Asshole, Billy Hargrove Tries to Be a Better Person, Bisexual Steve Harrington, F/M, Gay Disaster Billy Hargrove, God save us all, M/M, Post S2, Billy's Camaro is possessed, I pretend S3 didn't happen, oh yeah and it's his mom, why? because I said so

Language: English

Characters: Billy Hargrove, Billy Hargrove's Camaro - Character, Billy Hargrove's Mother, Dustin Henderson, Maxine "Max" Mayfield, Neil Hargrove, Steve Harrington

Relationships: Billy Hargrove/Steve Harrington, Maxine "Max" Mayfield/Lucas Sinclair

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Summary:

Billy's mom died when he was 6.

Now she's back, possessing his camaro, and giving her son life advice through Cher songs (and a few others - but mainly Cher). And she just so happens to come back right when Steve Harrington waltz's into his life.

*For writing purposes - I'm using all of her current songs, regardless of when they came out. Pretend Cher was as famous and established as she is in 2021 back in the 80's.

(On temp. hiatus)

1. Number Of The Beast

Author's Note:

Is this me flexing my love for incorporating songs into my writing? Yes. Yes it is.
Get ready for so much fucking Cher.

Thank you to Leo Stop Talking, Ihni, & CupidsIntern over on discord for inspiring this!

****UPDATE:** I have changed this chapter to be taking place in April of 1985 - their all still in school, just the events of starcourt will be changed/altered for this to take place differently & be at an earlier date.

Billy was 6 when Cameron Emily Hargrove died.

6, 6, 6 - The number of the beast.

The Number Of The Beast by Iron Maiden is playing on the camaros speaker's, the car winding down back roads on its way to Hawkins Middle & High.

Number Of The Beast is Billy's new favorite song. Everytime he hears the familiar guitar riff, he gets excited.

He'll be driving, and then theres that guitar to put him in a good mood. Billy sings along gleefully whenever it comes on, repeating the lyrics that are drilled into his head.

*"I left alone, my mind was blank
I needed time to think
To get the memories from my mind
What did I see? Can I believe?
That what I saw that night was real and not just fantasy?"*

He'll keep singing till he gets to the "*'Cause in my dreams it's always there*

The evil face that twists my mind and brings me to despair".

And then he's getting even more hyped up as the song really kicks in, sometimes even rolling the windows down to where he can smell the cowshit. He'll stick his head out, letting the breeze push back his hair while that signature metal scream plays.

Max rolls her eyes at him every time.

"God, you're such a loser." She huffed, watching him do it for the 3rd time this week. His hair whipped back, earring tugging as it was blown in the same direction. He only stayed out of the window for a moment, reluctantly settling back into the driver's seat.

"You can't even drive, so shut it. My car, my fun." He replied with ease.

Max went silent, pouting as the song continued to play. She probably wanted Madonna or Wham! - which were strictly forbidden in the camaro. Metal only for his precious car - no brain rotting pop '*music*'. Billy ecstatically tapped on the steering wheel with his fingers, not giving a fuck what his brat little sister thought. Iron Maiden was *the* shit, and probably the coolest band ever - after Motley Crue and Black Sabbath, of course.

"If you're so obsessed with this crap, why don't you just try to summon the devil? He's gotta sing better than Bruce Dick-fucker."

Billy's head snapped to her, eyes narrowing down into a glare.

“First of - don’t you ever insult Bruce Dick- *in-son* in this car or I’ll fucking eject-o seat your ass out the door.” His hand hovered over the door lock, telling her to try it. She just glared back, sticking her tongue out.

“And second off - yeah. Maybe I should try to summon the devil -” His eyes scanned the road ahead, smirking. “Why not try now?”

With a quick push down on the gas pedal the car rocketed forward, Max screeching at the unexpected lurch.

“BILLY!” She screamed, smacking at him. She wasn’t afraid of the speed, but she was not a fan of his sudden decisions with no warning. Plus - Billy didn’t exactly drive smoothly.

“C’MON MAXINE! LET’S SUMMON THE DEVIL - I BET SHE LIKES SPEED!” He hollered, laughing his ass off while the tachometer and speedometer rose. Max gripped the ledge of the door panel, pink fingernails clutching into the leather.

“WHY THE FUCK IS THE DEVIL A SHE?!” She shouted over the rising motor, watching Billy coming up close to the end of the road. There was a stop sign there and a car waiting - oh fucking god.

“WHY NOT?! COME ON MAX, LET’S PRAY TO THE DEVIL!” He took his hands off the wheel, putting them into a prayer position. He closed his eyes, Maxine screaming at him to stop it. He did this shit a lot - recklessly driving. Threatening to hit her friends with the car, sometimes doing donuts for fun, running from the cops - closing his eyes on the highway and flooring it even. She instinctively grabbed at the wheel, smacking her brother’s leg to make him quit it.

“LET OFF THE GAS YOU DUMB FUCK!”

“Oh devilish mother!” Billy started, shouting his words as the car’s motor revved, whining as the transmission shifted up a gear. Max shouted at him more to stop.

“Today we pray to you and ask you please! Give us good music mother, for we have given you speed & thrill! Send us your advocate and their good music, better than Iron Maiden!”

“SHUT THE FUCK UP AND PAY ATTENTION TO THE ROAD!”

“We thank you deep underground mother,”

“BILLY!” She screamed louder, slamming on his arm with her hands.

He opened his eyes, grinning.

“HAIL SATAN!”

And then he put the brakes on as the car skidded, grabbing the wheel and slowing down.

They screeched into the stop sign, hitting the white line on the road - ‘perfect’ stop. The other driver who was waiting looked startled but raised their hand in a sheepish ‘thank you?’, and went. Billy couldn’t help but turn, looking down at his little sister with a grin.

“Do you think I would’ve passed my drivers test?” He asked shyly, batting his eyelashes and pushing out his lips into a pout.

“The only thing I think,” She breathed, eyes wide and giving him a death glare, “Is that I’m going to be Hawkins, Indiana’s first juvenile murderer.”

Billy laughed at that one, letting off the brake and pushing down gently on the gas.

The rest of the Iron Maiden album played for the duration of their ride.

Max 'stayed after school for drama club'. Again.

Billy swore that on the day Neil found out Hawkins Middle School didn't even have a drama club, and that Max was never there - that was going to be the day he died.

She'd been doing this for almost an half entire year now, fucking around with her little brat friends and boyfriend, lying that she was in drama club. She was actually out at the arcade or biking to one of their houses, where Billy would be forced to pick her up.

He silently waited in the car every time he had to pick the girl up, Iron Maiden cassette playing.

Something was wrong with the tape though.

It had played fine on the drive to the middle school & across the street to the high school this morning - but once he'd gotten out of basketball practice & went to pick up Max it kept playing weird, going fuzzy in parts. He kept trying to replay it as he waited in front of Mike Wheeler's house - but nothing helped. It was like the tape was just blank or rubbed down, hissing static at him.

Strange.

Number Of The Beast was the worst though. The recording of the song was almost entirely static except for a few lines that would play, hushed now.

It'd play the white noise, and then Billy would hear " *I left alone, my mind was blank*

I needed time to think

To get the memories from my mind

What did I see? Can I believe?"

Then more static. Then a faint “ *Cause I just had to see, was someone watching me?*”.

And even more static, skipping almost the entirety of the song. He sat in silence, waiting to see if anything else would play.

And finally there would be a faded “*Six six six, the number of the beast*

Six six six, the one for you and me...

...I'm coming back, I will return.”

And then the song would finish, and the tape would switch to Run to The Hills.

It made no sense, Billy pulling the cartridge out and inspecting it. It didn't look broken? And it played fine earlier... So what was the issue?

His best guess was that somehow, it'd gotten warm in the car and the cassette heated up in the player, melting the plastic. That had never happened before, but it was his most intellectual idea to explain why the tape was playing so weird. Maybe the player shut down wrong, some electrical error caused it to eat at the tape and ruin it.

Or maybe the tape was just junk.

Who knows.

A pulling on the door handle alerted him, his fingers flicking up the lock for Maxine.

“Did you touch my tape? Cause the things all fucke...”

His voice died in his throat as he came to see Steve Harrington, opening his car door in a rush. He didn't step in, just kept the door opened and peered inside.

“Have you seen the kids?”

His voice sounded panicked - his posture was antsy, like he was nervous. Billy couldn't blame him, with the fact that the last time

they talked was in October (It was currently April), and it ended in Max sticking Billy with some weird syringe to stop him from beating Steve more.

Billy blinked.

“Excuse me - *what?* ”

He was concerned as to why the fuck Steve was coming to *him* about the kids. They avoided each other like the plague, and now suddenly the hairspray loving brunette was pulling on his car door handle, asking him where the kids were, acting like they were all buddy buddy. It freaked Billy the ever living hell out.

“ *The kids* . Have you seen them - they were supposed to be here! But Mrs. Wheeler says they're not...”

Billy took in a breath. First - his Iron Maiden cassette goes to shit. Now - Maxine is missing while he has a curfew in 30 minutes, and he's face to face with Harrington, whom he isn't sure if could even tolerate for a few seconds longer.

“....I haven't seen them, Harrington.” His face hardened, glaring at the house. “Aren't you supposed to be the overgrown bastard's babysitter?”

Steve deadpanned, shooting a “Maybe, but I wish I wasn't.” His arms crossed, looking back at the house with an anxious foot tap. For once, Billy could agree with something he said. He wouldn't want to be the needy fuckers babysitter either.

“Well why are you so stressed about it?” Billy shrugged, raising an eyebrow. “They'll come bounding back eventually.”

Steve stared at him for a moment, leaning into the car. He had to have just finished a cigarette, the smoke on his breath too potent as it wafted into the car when he leaned in. Billy could feel the other's hot air on his face, ticking his upper lip.

"When those little shits disappear and go radio silent?" He held up a walkie talkie, pressed the button and said "*Dustin, do you copy?* ". They waited a moment. Nothing. "Something is up, and they're getting into trouble."

"Maybe the battery died." Billy suggested, poking the walkie talkie with a finger. This felt weird - being so close to Harrington and not fighting. He debated on bringing up his big, overconfident personality - but truly he just wanted to get home, and he was not happy dealing with Max's shit. Plus, Harrington was kind of on his side right now in an odd way.

"Do you want to take that bet?"

No. He did not. Especially not with Neil's curfew looming overhead like Cinderella's clock striking midnight.

Dealing with Harrington finding these kids would be better than Neil. "Where do you think they could be?"

"Well-" Steve started, gesturing his hands. "The Byer's house is my first guess - and then they were muttering something about the pool... so maybe there? I don't know, I don't have enough gas to go check - and I'm supposed to be bringing Dustin home for some family dinner and I am *not* going to make sweet Claudia Hargrove disappointed an-"

"*Okay.*" He cut Steve off, rolling his eyes with annoyance. "I get it." He gestured to the seat. "Just get the fuck in. We can find the little shits & go home."

The ride was silent besides Steve directing, clearly uncomfortable as he squirmed in the leather seat, fingers wrapped around the seatbelt for comfort.

Billy groaned at his wiggling, turning on the radio since the Iron Maiden cassette was junk.

“Do you have to fucking piss or something? Stop moving, it's distracting.” He bitched, not taking his eyes off the road. He was beginning to brew, in the process of starting to fume that Max had disappeared - and 10:00 was inching closer and closer, the clock reading that they'd already wasted 10 minutes checking the Byer's house, which was a dead end. Now they were driving to the pool, and if that was a bust, maybe the arcade.

“Sorry.”

Steve went quiet, listening to the radio. His eyebrows lowered into contemplation, an almost bewildered looking slowly painting across his face.

“What? Did you get a bright idea or something, King Steve?” He leered the words, irritated at his passengers' annoying habits.

“...You listen to the local pop station?”

Billy slammed on the brakes.

The car jerked, Steve unpreparedly flying forward a little, the seatbelt catching him before he tipped back into the seat.

“*What?*” Billy's voice was a snarl, head slowly turning off the road to look Steve dead in the eyes. “Care to repeat that, *amigo?*”

Billy hated pop more than anything in his life. It was his determined passion as a metal head - no fucking pop. *Ever.*

“Y-You have uhm - Cher on -” He gestured to the radio. “I like Cher? She’s cool! Nothing wrong with Cher!” His voice came out as a nervous laugh, raising up as his hands waved around to try and cool the situation.

His mom, Cameron Emily Hargrove, *loved* Cher. She had a big framed photo of her in their California home. He could see the poster framed up above the couch, Cher and Sonny on a street corner of what he guessed was New York. The black and white no entry sign, Sonny’s stupid furry boots and his arm wrapped around Cher’s shoulders, her smile wide and ebony hair trailing down her front.

He found it ironic that they divorced a year after his mother died. At least she wouldn’t have to see her marriage model fall apart. He could hear her in his ear, petting at his hair while they played the radio. *“There’s a Cher song for every moment of life, William. She’ll get you through it all.”*

The radio was indeed playing Cher, her name flashing on the display. “I hate Cher.”

He turned the radio down, and moved his hand back to the wheel.

And then the radio turned back up.

“I *told* you , I fucking *hate* Cher.” Billy growled, hand reaching back over to turn it down.

“I didn’t...do that..” Steve stared at the radio, eye’s wide.

Billy’s eyes rolled hard, turning to him and putting his hand back to turn the song down. “Yeah well who the fuck did it, dumbass? Who else is there but you? Do you really think I’m fucking senile Harring...”

His voice went silent as the song came on louder now. He turned to look as the radio dial spun on its own beneath his fingers. Hell on Wheels was playing.
“..ton.”

“Oh fuck.”

Steve grabbed onto his arm, fear in his eyes. “Stop the fucking car right now.”

“WHAT?!” Billy looked up from his radio to Steve, who looked like he had seen a ghost. Billy probably looked about the same.

“PULL OVER BILLY!”

His voice was loud and demanding, grabbing onto the wheel and turning it into the ditch. Looks like the blonde had no choice.
“Jesus Fucking H. Christ!”

He slowed the car, Steve already ripping off his seatbelt and popping up the door lock, clamouring out before the thing even stopped.
“GET OUT OF THE CAR, get out of the car, get out of the car get out of the car getoutofthecar-” His words began to pick up to string together in a rising panic, running over to Billy’s side and yanking on him.

“What the fuck?!” Billy yelped as he was dragged away from the car, watching it sit idly underneath a street lamp.

“Quiet.” Steve warned, grabbing him close.

“WHA-”

“QUIET!” He hissed, clapping an arm around Billy torso, leaving Billy with blue eyes darting around like flies trying to escape a window. Billy shut up quickly.

The night was silent besides the peep frogs and the camaros rumbling engine, Steve cautiously continuing to back them away from the running car. Hell on Wheels by Cher kept playing, Billy looking at his car in confusion. It never played pop. That was like foreign to the car - he didn't even think the thing could handle it without combusting on the spot.

Cami, as the car was called (after his mother who owned it originally), was living on metal only for the past 5 years of 13 year old Billy putting it back together & eventually making it his daily driver.

He never put on pop - not even for Max.

"Have you experienced anything odd or paranormal with your car in the past few days?" Steve whispered, eye's not coming off the car. His grip on Billy tightened, holding the other protectively to him.

Billy thought, looking at the car and up at Steve, his hair brushing the others cheek.

"Uh - a light in the dash went out but it's been going for a while..." He tried to think.

The tape.

"I had this Iron Maiden tape-" He started, boots shuffling with Steve as they backed to the curb on the other side of the road. "And uh - it was playing fine this morning? And then I put it in coming to get Max - and it's half static, like it's wiped off clean in parts. On Number Of The Beast it's horrible, like half of the song is wiped off... *Dude you're fucking freaking me out.* "

The anxiety rose in Billy's voice with every word, dropping the act of anger and annoyance to instead let Steve pull him close in a terrified manner. He didn't like this one bit.

"Hawkins is uhm, not *entirely right*, you see -" Steve started, "Stuff like this is a bad sign... and the kid's going radio silent..." Steve pulled himself a little closer, staring at the car as his voice trailed off.

"Y'know when you beat the shit out of me? And I was alone with the kids, and there were those drawings on the walls?"

His coffee cup eyes refused to peel off the camaro, watching as it

purred and Cher kept playing, becoming louder bit by bit.

“Yeah?” Billy turned to his beloved car. Horrified of it.

“Well you see-”

Steve didn’t finish the sentence.

Instead of finishing, A light suddenly flashed up on the two, both of them screaming like little girls and jumping a foot high.

“What are you doing with Steve?!” Max shouted, tossing her bike to the side. “GET OFF HIM!” Max was stomping towards the pair, who had fallen into a position of instinctively grabbing onto each other. Billy halfway climbed up Steve’s leg like an anxious cat, and Steve hugged Billy to him like a baby bear in need of its mother.

It was pathetic.

Billy pushed the other off first, grunting as Steve stumbled away.

“Where the fuck were you?” He sneered, hand reaching out to grab the flashlight and shove it down towards the roadway once Max became close enough to him. The light flickered at his feet, the two siblings not paying attention as they got into an argument.

“I asked first.”

“And I’m supposed to be picking your stupid ass up - BUT HERE YOU ARE!” He gestured outwards at the road, “Not where you’re supposed to be & fucking late, shitbird!”

“I just wanted to go to the arcade with them, you meathead.”

“ *What did you call me?*”

She drew back, repeating herself slowly. “ *I said* - I wanted to go to the arcade with them. You *fuck-ing*. Meat. *HEAD.*”

As the enunciated the D, Billy snatched the flashlight from her hands with a rough grip, and threw it on the ground to their right. It's glass pieces shattered on impact, the larger metal part landing right in front of the bike that Mike Wheeler sat upon. Billy looked at it as the light blacked out, bulb destroyed.

"Get in the fucking car Maxine." He turned to see Harrington staring at him with wide eyes. Billy glared back.

"Fuck you and your dumbass ghosts. My car is *fine*."

Steve went to open his mouth and blabber something but Billy just shoved him down to the ground, the other letting out a yelp. Billy walked over him like it was basketball and got into the car.

He drove off in a hurry, not even looking back at the kids or Harrington as he pulled away. Billy realized he probably should have not gotten so pissed - and he probably should have given them a ride back. But he hadn't - and he wasn't going to overthink it too much. Besides, leaving people like that was typical Billy Hargrove behavior. What else did they expect? A ride home, then kiss on the cheek and a bedtime story?

Maxine was silent in the passenger seat despite Cher's 'Hell On Wheels' that continued to play on repeat, over and over on the radio. Billy tried to turn it down but it would slowly creep back up again slowly (although the physical volume dial did not move this time) - refusing to stop playing. Fucking radio was broken too now. Great. He caught her looking at it, wanting to ask, but she stayed silent.

Billy parked in their driveway, skating narrowly past Neil who went to open his mouth. Max opened hers first.

"I wanted to go to the arcade after with my friend *Lucy* & was late back. Billy had to come find me." She spat out. Lucy was her codename for Lucas - Mike was Michelle, Dustin was Darcy, and Will was Willow.

"This true?" Neil asked Billy. He nodded slowly, trying not to seem too eager about the lie. Neil contemplated for a moment before giving Billy a stern look.

"Keep better track of your sister. Now go to bed, it's a school night." That was a win in his book.

In his bed, Billy was left to think about the car. How it ate or destroyed his Iron Maiden Cassette. How Steve fucking Harrington was in the car, driving around with him looking for the kids. How now it was stuck on Cher - continuously playing Hell on Wheels. How he'd instantly jumped into his arms like a fucking baby at the first sign of danger. How stupid it all felt now looking back on it.

He should have told him to fuck off and found Max himself.

Now he felt weird inside, like a tinge of guilt and annoyance was building up.

Whatever.

Stupid fucking Harrington & his paranoid of the paranormal ass.

Now Billy had to deal with figuring out what the fuck was wrong with his car.

2. Cher Mania & Cowboys From Hell

Summary for the Chapter:

"His car is his padded cage, and Cher is his silence that makes him hear his own heartbeat.

He hates it."

The chapter in which Dustin gets a gun, Steve does a cowboy accent, Billy loses most of his sanity, theres a fight, and the camaro absolutely won't stop playing Cher.

The camaro continued to play Cher, over and over. And over.

And over.

And over.

And Over.

It would not stop.

Billy slapped the radio, he smacked it with a basketball sneaker, he tried to turn it down.

But no.

It would not stop playing Cher, turning it back up everytime. He'd drive Max to school - it'd play Cher. He went home from basketball practice? Cher. He went to the store to get some milk and maybe a pack of cigarettes? Cher. Again.

Trying to just go on a late night drive? Cher.

Cher, Cher, Cher. Cher out the fucking ass. It might as well have been renamed the Cher mobile with how much Cher it played.

It did seem to have favorites that constantly played - Hell On Wheels,

If I Could Turn Back Time, The Music's No Good Without You, and You Wouldn't Know Love. Billy could sort of take them - they weren't *too* bad to hear at first.

But by the 7th replay? Oh fuck no.

Billy wanted to slam his head into the steering wheel until it cracked upon and his brain flopped out like sludgy goo, finally silencing all of the Cher. Everytime he turned the camaro on, all it wanted to play was Cher, and he was sick of it.

He'd tried to shove cassettes in, but the player wouldn't take them. The car wouldn't stop playing Cher at him, spitting his tapes out when he tried to force them inside.

It seemed like Cami The Camaro wouldn't take anything but music by *THE* Cherilyn Sarkisian.

He wouldn't take it though. This was his car - not Cher's. So here he was, on a Friday Night, driving down the road with a huge gaping hole in the middle of his dash where the original radio *was* .

If he got one more moment of Cher's 70's hell, he was sure he was going to just stab himself in the ears with a Phillips Head to make it stop. Going to the parts store for a new one was his best solution, and he was silently praying to god that it might work.

If not?

Looks like Hawkins High should start preparing his memorial service.

Billy Hargrove - dead via a self inflicted screwdriver stabbing incident over a car that would not stop playing Cher.

The Hawkins Auto Parts store had a general smell of mustiness, like a library where instead of books that had been sitting on shelves for centuries, it was metal and aluminum parts. Collecting dust in their plastic bags, frail cardboard boxes holding them in place.

It was all comforting almost, wrapping the Californian up in a warmth.

Parts Stores - no matter where you went, they always smelled the same. The smell reminded him of being a kid, when his mom brought him to the one she was employed at in Santa Cruz.

“How can I help you?” The counter boy, Eddie by his nametag, asked. He looked similar to Billy, just his hair was long and dark, and he looked younger, and generally more kind. The WASP pin & the pentacle on his work shirt shone bright.

“Need a radio for a ‘72 z28 camaro.”

His words were short today, exhausted from the hell of trying to take apart the paneling on his dash, and the process of labelling where each wire went, doing everything right to somehow still doubt himself on how correct it was.

Then, once he gave up on trying to make sure everything was correct, he went into fighting his old radio, kicking it down the curb a couple of times for stress relief.

It really just made him more tired, worn down from the Hawkins heat that came with working in the house on Cherry Lane’s driveway, and the excruciating task of prying the radio out.

“I think we have one - let me go check in the back.”

Eddie disappeared into a backroom, leaving Billy to lean up on the counter for a moment to think about this whole radio thing, and the entire Cher fiasco.

Cher was such an odd choice - and to his knowledge, there was no radio station within his antenna's reach that played exclusively Cher.

Last he’d checked, the radio was left on it’s normal Hawkins college station that was run by metalheads - Hawkins 104.5, with two chicks named Sammy and Kate taking listener calls in their bitchy monotone

voices.

Max's oblivious self said he should call in and ask them out on a date. He would have preferred to be friends, girls not really being his... forte.

Not like she would know that for a longgggg time anyways. As much as he loved her, he would not be forking over such sensitive information to her, just so her blabbering seagull mouthed self could tell his business to anyone and everyone.

Not again.

Not after California, and the mess that landed him in this shit hole.

"I've got one - if I doesn't work, just come back within the week and if you keep all the parts in condition plus your box and receipt, you can return it."

Eddie smiled kindly at him, typing numbers into his register as Billy forked over the cash. Billy blinked at the sudden appearance of him, too lost in thought to see the other come back with the radio.

"Thanks." He grunted out, taking the radio's box up under his arm. He was not entirely happy about the hole he just burned into his wallet - fucking Cher, dropping his savings like it was money on one of her hilariously expensive leotards or something. He was going to write a personal letter to the star and request his money back for the radio cost - it was her, after all, who broke the thing.

Fuckin' Cher.
Stupid bitch.

Billy left the parts store with the radio tucked close to him, plopping it down to sit passenger. He was already saying his prayers in the

parking lot, repeating them over and over as he drove home.

“Dear God.

You are a bitch.

Please make my radio stop playing Cher or we are going to meet really soon. I also will punch you really hard.

Thanks,

Billy.”

He kept repeating it in a hushed mumble over and over, driving down Tavern Street, then past Baum Road.

And then, towards Loch Nora.

He breathed in the cigarette he'd lit up, debating if he wanted to take that way home. It was no shorter or longer than going past it.

Fuck it. Why not?

Or well actually - there were a lot of reasons why not.

And the main one was coming up on his right as he turned down the wealthy street, eyes flickering over the grey windbreaker clad figure pulling papers out of his mailbox.

Harrington.

With his stupid ass perfectly primmed hair, big doe eyes going right up from his mail to stare the camaro down.

Billy revved the car like an ass, and floored it. The motor roared as it jumped on the sudden givingness that Billy's foot gave it.

Harrington jumped, mail spilling out in surprise as Billy came shooting for him.

Steve clambered up onto the curb, those doe eyes expanding to be somehow bigger as Billy got feet from him. He made no effort to slow down.

The camaro simply ripped past in a blue blur, kicking up his mail in its pissed off dust.

Fuck off, pret-...loser boy. Stop looking at me.

He carried on down the residential street full of richie rich goody two shoes whores, beady eyes glancing up to look in the mirror.

Harrington's blurry figure was bent over to collect up his mail, head turned downwind to watch the camaro.

Billy didn't know why he even came down this way in the first place.

It takes the metalhead 2 hours to get the radio in, and another 3 to figure out the wiring.

He really should not do wiring - by the end of it he's sure to swear off it for forever. Never again.

It doesn't help that he also found out halfway through he was doing it backwards and well...

He almost broke the new radio, and if he did that he was going to need TWO paychecks from Cherilyn for his troubles.

Thankfully, for now, it was only going to be one.

He screwed in the last piece, sighing in relief.
Done.

Thank fucking god.

His body slumped into the driver's seat, hand reaching out to the ignition. He turned two click's forward, body shivering with anticipation.

Silence rang out.

And then, the best sound ever.

“ I’M YOUR TURBO LOVER, TELL ME THERE’S NO OTHER-”

Billy half jumped out of the seat at the immense volume, a high pitched yelped escaping his lips as he shoved the volume down.

“I’m your turbo lover

Better run for cover-”

A lopsided grin fell onto his lips as the surprise subsided, head leaning back into the seat in delight.
Thank.

Fucking.

God.

Real music. *Finally.*

"We hold each other closer, as we shift to overdrive

And everything goes rushing by, with every nerve alive

We move so fast it seems as though we've taken to the sky

Love machines in harmony, we hear the engines cry " Rob Halford
wailed out, Billy's fingers drumming along to it in bliss.

Oh Thank Jesus.

"I'm your turbo lover"

Thank You Sweet-

"Tell me there's no oth-"

The radio clicked, turned to static.

....Mary?

"All alone, I must stand"

Cher.

Fucking. Cher.

Again.

“FUCK OFF!!” Billy screeched in blind rage, foot kicking at the radio. It only slipped on the dash, kicking the volume higher.

“SHUT THE FUCK UP! I DON'T WANT CHER!”

His testosterone was pumping, pissed the fuck off and mad as shit that this radio thing was a futile effort for a still remaining problem.

The radio responded with a *“EVEN WHEN I'M RUNNING, AND IT FEELS, LIKE A DREAM-”*

“NO!” He shouted back.

“I NEED TO AWAKEN FROM”

“NO! FUCK OFF, FUCK YOU!”

He yanked the volume down with his hand, death gripping the tiny dial wheel. Under it, friction began to apply.

Trying to turn back up, fighting his hand with invisible force.

“No! No, you piece of shit! You fucking bitch!” He hollered at the camaro, the knob answering his yells with more Cher and resistance. Tension began to build up in his bones, ebbing up through his veins into the pits of his stomach, beginning to press down and strangle him.

“I believe

When it hurts

We must keep on trying”

Billy did all he could think of.

He grabbed the key, shoving it backwards and yanking it out.

To his dismay, the car quieted but... the music refused to subside. Everything was off but the music was still playing, music running somehow with no power.

It only grew louder, taunting.

“But I want, and I need

Like a river needs the rain

There's a bridge I need to burn before I leave- ”

The tension grew up his stomach like ugly vines, curling and spreading up around intestines in a sickness of dread and pain.

They began to make their way to his lungs, knocking the breath from him. Each breath felt like crushing weight being applied, panic arising into his body like a fast killing sickness.

Billy screamed at it, smacking aimlessly on the radio in anger.

“I JUST WANT TO BREATHE AGAIN! ” The music howled, Cher’s voice yelling at him.

“SHUT UP! SHUT UP, SHUT UP, SHUT UP !”

The horrible runway/disco-esque music filled his car, still laying out on the driveway with the door open. He must’ve looked like a psycho to the neighbors, Neil and Susan thankfully out to dinner, and Max sleeping over with her friend El.

He hoped the neighbors weren't already calling the cops on him, having to explain,

"Yes, Hawkins PD uhm - our teenage neighbor - yes the rowdy blonde one with the mullet - he's having some sort of mental breakdown to Cher? Yes please, come right on down-"

Billy's voice broke out into a whimpering cry, peeking up and cracking in frustration. The metaphorical vines secured around his throat, choking him internally to beg.

" *Stop, please* -" He pleaded out, that ugly bulldog pout coming over his face.

The tell tale sign that he was at his breaking point.

He only got that pitiful, wallowed up face when he was about to cry or was in immense unhideable pain - it was something he knew well from getting made fun of for it when he cried. He may have been pretty, *but god*, was Billy an ugly crier.

Tears were already threatening to spill over, but now they were truly bubbling up like a volcano threatening to explode.

Cher only makes it worse, continuing to sing.

"Like a summer's day I need to feel the heat again

I only want to keep the stone from rolling

I only want to learn to feel the rain"

"Stop," Billy tried again, lip quivering at the first of many tears started to leak.

" Then maybe I could stop the leaves from falling

I only want to learn to freeze the flame "

This song was one of his Mom's favorites too. It was only making it

worse, with his dead mother surging to the forefront, and the mind numbing frustrations of having a radio that won't stop playing Cher. It stung like a knife, Billy pleading once more.

"Please - please I can't-" His voice is high, choked up into his throat as he wracks up a cry.

"I know I'll be alive again

I want to be alive ag-"

"S-STOP!"

This time the music cut, Billy's shriek of pain loud and clear against the newfound. Tears bust out at every seam, nose already dripping snot down his lips and chin.

He's 5 again, screaming out his childish, intolerant anger and pain to his mother.

He wishes she was here to comfort him, so maybe the frustrating Cher music that is drilling into his head will hurt less.

"...Stop.." He croaked out into the silence, thick eyelashes fluttering closed as he pressed his eyes shut.

Fuck.

The tight grip was still all over his body, throat closing, stomach twisted into tight knots, lungs collapsing inwards on themselves.

The radio spun again, Billy's tired eyes opening and turning to it, nose sniffing.

"Fuck you." He muttered.

The radio turned slow, volume rising to a moderate audio. From the speakers, a tune too familiar to Billy croaked out.

The spanish sounding guitar started it off, Cher's voice diving in soft melodic crones.

"Chiquitita, tell me what's wrong

You're enchained by your own sorrow

In your eyes there is no hope for tomorrow”

The song began to pick up.

“How I hate to see you like this

There is no way you can deny it

I can see that you're oh so sad, so quiet”

Chiquitita.

Little one in spanish, usually meant for a little girl with the feminine a at the end. Adapted into a song by Swedish Pop group ABBA.

The song may have been originally by ABBA but Billy knew Cher had a cover of it. He knew not only the original song but every lyric, every note, every pause. His mom took up Chiquitita because of the Cher version, latching onto the lyrics and singing it to him all she could, until it became so ingrained in him that it was like moving his fingers or toes.

It may have been an ABBA song, but if Cherilyn Sarkisian covered it, it was perfection to his mom. Cher liked it, so Cameron Hargrove liked it.

And if Cameron liked it, no matter how much Billy denied it outloud, screamed from the mountain tops and thrashed around, screaming his hate - deep down, he liked it too.

“Chiquitita, tell me the truth

I'm a shoulder you can cry on

Your best friend, I'm the one you must rely on

You were always sure of yourself

Now, I see you've broken a feather

I hope we can patch it up together”

The beat kicked in and the pace picked up, Cher's voice called out to

him like an extending hand.

“Chiquitita, you and I know

How the heartaches come and they go and the scars they're leaving

You'll be dancing once again when the pain will end

You will have no time for grieving”

Billy could have sworn that he was a child again, his mother in her white dress with roses dancing around him on the beach in a colorful swirl. Long Stevie Nicks-esque scarves fluttering down her bangle filled arms, tassels brushing across his forehead as she twirled round and round.

Neil said if she twirled enough, she'd probably be able to harness the wind and cause a hurricane.

She would 'Rock You Like A Hurricane.'

“Chiquitita, you and I cry”

The choir joined in with Cher, Billy feeling Cameron grabbing up his tiny hands and laughing at him to join in and sing.

“But the sun is still in the sky and shining above you

Let me hear you sing once more like you did before

Sing a new song, Chiquitita

Try once more, like you did before

Sing a new song, Chiquitita”

The song quieted into a lullaby, Billy's head lifting up farther to look at the radio, words buzzing across the display that still had its plastic wrap on it.

His mom would sing this part to him specifically, nose nuzzling into his as she called him pet names. If he wasn't her little guppy, or her baby bird, or even her sweet pea -

He was her Chiquitita.

Or well - he was until she died.

' Always my Chiquitita, Billy Darling. Always.'

The words **"CHIQUITITA - CHER"** blazed in dashed pixels, rolling over the green display.

"So the walls came tumbling down

And your love's a blown-out candle

All is gone, and it seems too hard to handle

Chiquitita, tell me the truth

There is no way you can deny it

I see that you're oh so sad, so quiet"

"Why are you doing this?" He spoke aloud, questioning the car who he knew couldn't answer. Even if it had a mind of it's own, all it had done was play a fuck ton of Cher to the point where he cried from the defeated insanity it drove him too.

The attempt was all he could think to do though, tired of the music & the stress.

"Chiquitita, you and I know

How the heartaches come and they go and the scars they're leaving "
Cami The Camaro responded, Cher continuing her song.

"That doesn't really help much y'know."

"You'll be dancing once again when the pain will end

You will have no time for grieving"

Billy huffed, rolling his eyes at the radio.

"What'd you want me to do, dance or something? Do I look like a fuckin' hippie?"

No way in hell he was dancing.

The radio cranked itself up, seemingly frustrated with him.

"Chiquitita, you and I cry

But the sun is still in the sky and shining above you

Let me hear you sing once more like you did before"

Billy threw his hands up, shaking them. He may have been great at English and loved Edgar Allen Poe, but this shit was getting a little too poetic for him.

"What does that even mean? C'mon Cher, give me a clue!"

"Sing a new song, Chiquitita"

"What does that even mean?! I wasn't even singing!" Billy was definitely going insane.

"Try once more, like you did before

Sing a new song, Chiquitita"

“WHAT SONG!?” Billy yelled, hands flying above his head and eyes going wide, brows falling to crease down in irritation. The tears were coming back to Billy, surging up as his temper surged.

“Try once more, like you did before”

“I DON’T GET IT!!” He shrieked, a bubble bursting in him as a new sobbing fit broke out.

He really needed to get in control of his crying today.

“Sing a new song, Chiquitita ”

The lyrics stopped, the song going into its piano.
The cheery tune of the music’s outro only made his suffering worse, forcing him to listen.

“I don’t get it!”

Leather boot went to the steering wheel, kicking in fury.

“I!” He kicked again, the crease of the heel to the sole fitting perfectly into the steering wheel’s shape.

“DONT!” Another kick.

“GET!” Rubber heel went into the steering wheel again.

“IT!”

And then kicks rained down upon the wheel, Billy letting out his anger and frustrations on it for a minute.

He kicked and kicked, going until his legs began to burn and the motivation to continue subsided.

The tears and sobbing noises hushed down, Billy left to slump into the seat as the song's outro kept playing.

“I. Don’t. Get. It... What does this even mean?”

The car fell quiet as the last notes rang out, radio turning off.

The answer was silence.

Billy still didn’t get it.

Billy was driving back down Loch Nora, and this time, upon seeing Steve getting his mail, he pulled into the driveway.

He didn’t plan on it, but Cher has continued to play constantly since yesterday’s breakdown and he has had enough.

There was a start to this madness, and it involved Maxine being late and Steve sitting in his car.

And then it started to play Cher.

And no2 it wouldn’t stop.

By all logic, where a problem starts, that's its cause.

So Billy is going to the start of his issue, to solve out the *kink* that is the source. To correct what went wrong, maybe get some answers on how to fix his *persistent* problem.

Billy's week is a neat, orderly garden of flowers, with only ugly, overgrown, rotted pain in the ass blossom that stuck out like a sore thumb.

And he fully intended to get out the scissors and snip it in the bud so everything would go back to order.

“Hello?” is what greets him from the drive, Steve confused as Billy got out of the camaro rapidly, door slamming shut.

He didn't answer Steve's question, just stalked forward with his head down. Fists balled.

“ *Hargrove*, what are you-”

Billy punched fast.
Fucking faster than he thought he could.

“WHY IS MY CAR PLAYING CHER, *DIPSHIT!*? *WHY!*” He exploded as Steve toppled over like a chess piece.

Cher had not stopped playing and at this rate, Billy's mental breakdowns about it have been nonstop all day - he's pulled over multiple times to lose his shit on trees, scream, cry, whatever he can do. His car is his padded cage, and Cher is his silence that makes him hear his own heartbeat.

He hates it.

Fists rained down in furious throws, smacking harder and harder.

The sound of Steve's grunts is better than Cher.

"WHY! WHY IS IT DOING THAT!" He roared, hitting the other's nose with his knuckles. It spat out blood, both nostrils running a sudden crimson.

"HEY!" A new voice shouted.

Blonde curls shot up to look at the voice, ringlets swinging in a whirl.

They fell onto muscle tee clad shoulders as his eyes met the barrel of the gun pointing down at him.

Dustin Henderson, finger on the trigger like it was nothing, pointing a black handgun right to his temple.

"GET OFF HIM YOU UGLY BASTARD!"

Billy shrieked and fell over.

He was rightfully terrified.

First off - the kid moved *silent*. Like a fucking ninja.

He just snuck up on Billy who was beating the hell out of his babysitter, all hushed and shit. That would strike fear in anyone.

And second - a little curly haired, DND loving, cleidocranial dysplasia having, 13 year old, holding a gun? Just in general? Oh fuck no. He

would rather be faced with Jason Voorhees.

At least he knew the serial killer could actually operate his weapons and wouldn't shoot somewhere where it would cause immense, prolonged pain.

For a sick but hilarious moment, Janie's Got A Gun came to Billy's mind, ice blue eyes staring up at the weapon that's still pointed at him, guarding Steve.

Janie's Dustin's got a gun

Janie's Dustin's got a gun

Her His whole world's come undone

From lookin' straight at the sun

What did her his daddy do?

What did he put you through?

They said when Janie Dustin was arrested-

"H-Hey!" Billy irked out, a nervous smile curling up his upper lip, hands going up above his head in defense. "C'mon I was just - you- C'mon you don't need that!"

"Yes I do!" The other shot back instantly, jostling it. Billy flinched, praying to god his little barely teenage finger didn't pull the trigger.

"Well you have no trigger discipline! And I don't know if the safety's off!"

Click.

“Now it is.”

Billy froze.

Fuck.

“Well I do declare,” Steve abruptly started, Billy's eyes plastering to him as words slurring from his lips, a finger pointed upwards into the air, quivering. He spoke in a horrible Texas accent, like he was Sheriff Buford T. Justice.

Somehow, with Cher, the general chaos of his day, and Dustin holding a gun to his head - Steve's sudden impression of an old western sheriff is the weirdest and most unexpected thing. He's also decently good at it too.

“It would *seem, gentlemen*, we have a standoff.” The words popped off his lips, stupid accent floating in the air.

Billy's eyes flicked to Dustin, then back to Steve who was laying there half beaten to shit, delirious, and back to Dustin and his gun.

He chose to ignore Steve for now and just deal with Dustin.

“ *Where did you even get that-*” Billy hissed, eyes narrowing to glare. If he died by the hands of Dustin Henderson, he was going to come back in an Anabelle doll and hunt the boy down. Knife him half to death or something, he didn't care.

“My dad.... His officeeee cabin-ette...” Steve spoke wonkily, eyes sliding over to him with a thick laze. His teeth were poking out, lip busted to all shit. He talked like he was drunk, brain jumbled up from the fight he'd unwarrantedly gotten. Billy must have beat him silly - literally.

“Dustin-” Steve spoke, those heavy eyes sliding slowly back up to the kid standing above him like a protective momma dog.

“What?” Dustin asked, tone concerned.

"Put the gun down, son- Billy's not worth it." His hand waved dismissively.

'I am too worth it!' Billy argued inside his head.

He definitely was worth a bullet - he was great. Who wouldn't want to shoot him? He was quite important and worth a shot.

"But he's a threat! We gotta get rid of him man!"

"Nahhh..." Steve sat up, pointing at the handgun and then to Billy. "We'd have to like... bury him.. Here and... things. His memorial would be on my nurtured La-awn dearest Dustin, and..." He slumped back down onto the sidewalk. "I don't think you could handle prison, boy."

Good god he hoped Mrs. Cherlston down the street never heard this accent, the thick marmalade worded Alabama woman probably ready to in an instant to beat Harrington the rest of the way to death with her cane.

"Do kids even go to prison?"

Billy lied. "Yeah, I almost did."

Steve gestured outwards, eyes falling closed.

"See. You'd get a buncha' Little Billy's in prison if you shot Big Billy here. And that would *suck*."

Dustin nodded. "That would suck. I hate Billy."

"Thanks." The blonde groaned, eyes still staring at the gun pointed at him.

Dear Jesus, who the fuck would leave a weapon more powerful than a fork in this kids vicinity. This time it was going to be Billy's funeral, instead of whatever kid or person he was fighting.

"Alright - so are we cool to put the gun down now?"

"Suree...." Dustin didn't sound too sure of himself.

"Alrighty," Steve smooth as honey suckle sheriff voice cooed, turning to the two.

"Now you boys, uhh... Dustin. You put down your here pistolah-" He coughed, two outstretched fingers tapping at the muzzle of the gun,

“and Billy you uh...”

He gestured.

“Fuck off?” Dustin attempted to fill in.

“No, no - his good old ster-e-o is busted and-”

“OKAY can you quit it with the accent? Why the fuck are you talking like you’re related to Dolly Parton.”

Steve grinned, rolling over fully to face Billy, finger held up like he was recalling a memory.

“Ah, Auntie Dolly. She is the secret’s of our family hair-“ He continued to talk. Billy just deadpanned to Dustin and spoke over a still going Steve.

“Is he suggesting....”

“That Dolly Parton is his.... aunt? Yeah. Yeah, he is.”

“And the accent?”

“Pretty sure it’s his way of diffusing the situation & you beat the shit out of him so I think his head’s jumbled.”

“Great .”

Steve was rambling now about hair and Sweet old Auntie Dolly and country bloodlines and-

“OKAY! WE GET IT *HARRINGTON* ! What do you want?” Billy interrupted.

“Weellllll,” he raised a finger to his chin, tapping it. “I would like a glass of iced tea, for Dusty bun’s over here to put down that there pistol-a, and then... then we can take a look at the ster-e-o.”

Here Billy was, losing his mind to the point of panic attacks and adult tantrums over Cher. Dustin’s still holding a gun (now thankfully lowered significantly, pointing more at Billy’s lower leg), and Steve is doing some bad cowboy voice to calm everyone down, asking for

Dustin to put his discard weapon so he can have some iced tea before they fix the stereo.

What the fuck is wrong with today - and this week in general?

“Alright.”

Dustin looked up at Billy, then down at the gun.

“Fine... How do I put the safety back on?”

Billy sighed and grabbed the handgun.

“Well,” Dustin started as he settled down into the camaros driver's seat, Billy gritting his teeth at how Dustin looked a little *too* comfortable there.

That green “Camp Know Where ‘84” shirt pressed into *his* backrest, inconsiderate sneakers dragging over the floor mat and onto the carpeting. Tools laying all over his dashboard, rolling down towards the windshield without care to where they could smack into the glass and create small cracks. Hands, placed up carelessly on his steering wheel, like this was a *casual experience*.

“There’s nothing wired wrong in the radio, it all checks out fine.”

Dustin tapped at the radio’s facade with Mr. Harrington’s phillips head screwdriver, digital display staying dark and speakers quiet.

The car sat inside the Harrington’s spacey garage now, white walls filled by a few tool boxes and shelves.

The Harringtons obviously weren’t a very mechanical or hands on family, seeing as no one with any experience working on cars would dare to paint garage walls *white* (where they would easily turn dark from grime), or have tool boxes full of pricey equipment that was still in its packaging, years past the date on the tag. Billy spotted one all the way back from ‘73, a Snap On Crescent wrench. Still with the

plastic wrap on it, coated in a thick layer of pollen and dust. It was odd. The Harrington garage looked like a stage set of what someone who had never stepped foot into a functioning workspace would have imagined one to look like.

Steve sat on a milk crate beside Billy, a bag of apologetic frozen peas plastered to his exhausted looking face. By now the furs worn off, the accent dead in the water, ice tea left inside the house. Dustin's orange laced Reeboks hung out of the camaro door, swinging and banging back against the metal door sill. Billy cursed internally at himself for even agreeing to let the kid in the car.

"Obviously. I'm not a dipshit who can't wire."

"Hey." Steve hissed, tired of Billy's sass and anxious standing around while Dustin pried apart his radio, trying to figure out what was wrong.

Billy did his best not to feel bad for beating him up for pretty much no reason besides that he was an easy punching bag. He glared back at him.

"So what's the issue then? Why's my shit playing Cher like it's a teenage girl mad at her boyfriend?"

Steve rolled his eyes, Dustin shrugging.

"Dunno. Have you messed with your antenna at all? Maybe it's stuck on a station?"

Stuck on a station. Yeah right. Sure.

Stuck on a station to where the shit plays when the entire car's got no key in the ignition. Stuck on a station to where it turns the radio up by itself, moves the knob like something's holding it from the other side and fighting his fingers that desperately try to turn it down. Stuck on a station that only plays Cher.

Stuck on a station.

In his dreams.

“No. It’s not a station.... Check the radio again. Something’s gotta be wrong with it.”

Maybe the radio was junk. Maybe a wire or two or three were going back, circuiting it out? Maybe the dial was getting jammed ‘cause it was old or something.... Even though it was all brand new. Who knows.

There just had to be a logical explanation for this.

Dustin groaned, flipping his phillips head over in his hand, fingers extending out to smack at the dashboard for his flashlight. Steve cleared his throat.

“Dustin - why don’t you go inside for a sec, bud? I’ll get you when I’m done.”

“What? And leave you with *him* ? Steve, man, I don’t know. That’s r-”
The kid shot up.

“Dustin.”

The kid shut his mouth fast, frowning.

Billy wished he could do that with Maxine.

“Fine.” Dustin muttered, stepping directly on the door sill and getting out. Billy half choked out an exasperated noise, teeth biting his tongue to stop it.

Dear god, this kid would be the death of him.

The white door to the house opened and closed, Steve waiting to hear footsteps walking away before he spoke.

“What the fuck is wrong with you?”

Great way to start things off, Steve.

Billy's eyes widened, face twisting up into a pissed off expression as he settled his weight onto one foot, hands going out in front of him to gesture.

“I dunno Harrington. Maybe I am fucking going *insane* at whatever this Cher bullshit is. What the fuck did *you DO* to my car?”

“What did I do?!” He responded, eyebrows flying up his forehead in shock, like it was 1692 and Billy had just accused him of being a witch.

“What did *I* do? Well I'll tell you -” He shuffled on the seat and began to stand, stretching up to look down on Billy, free hand extending out to let a finger poke the other's tank top wearing chest.

“*I*, didn't do *jack shit*,” Steve started, finger tapping out jack shit. “*YOU*, however, You came here and beat the snot out of me for no reason because you can't handle emotions. And *YOU* need to take a step off glaring and bitching at my kid or I'm gonna...” His words fell off, trying to come up with what he was going to do. Billy stood, silent, waiting.

“I'm gonna... smack you really hard and do the sheriff accent.”

“Forget the smack, the sheriff accent is enough. *Fine* .” He brushed the finger off his chest, scowl painted across his face. “Well then tell your *kid* to stop beating the shit out of my car. He's getting dirt everywhere and he has no sense of respect for it.” As he spoke he leaned in closer, settling his own finger on Steve's collarbone. “And it's not like I'm stupid for thinking you did something, *Harrington*. You were where this all started, and now my shitbox,” He turned to

the car, “sorry baby,” Turned back to Steve, “only plays Cher like it’s on a cult mission to indoctrinate me. And *YOU* said there was weird shit in this good for nothing town,”

His face inched up closer to the other, breathing half down his neck as he spoke, tone going quieter and quieter as he got to the point. He reached the others jawline, inches away as he hissed his words out.

“So, what’s going on, *amigo* ? What were you saying when we got cut off, and what aren’t you telling me?”

Billy expected Steve to move away, trying to escape his contact. Instead, he was met with Steve leaning in, cheek brushing his as he whispered into the blonde’s ear.

“Get off of me Billy.”

Every nerve in Billy’s body tensed up, words sending a shiver down his throat into his lungs, leaking out to his spine and to his ribs, traveling down in electric bolts as they raced towards the tips of his toes. Steve’s soft cheek against his felt like a lamb’s kiss, words stern but not harsh.

“I-” Billy began. Only to be shut up by the sound of a car choking, turning over before starting. Directly next to them, as camaro engine rang out.

“IS THIS LOVE, THAT I’M FEELING-”

The bag of Steve’s frozen peas fell from his hands, slapping onto the floor in a thick thud. The music was loud, as it always had to be for whatever horrible essence of surprise that the car wanted.

“IS THIS THE LOVE THAT, THAT IVE BEEN SEARCHINGGGG FOR,

IS THIS LOVE, OR AM I DREAMINN?” The car’s speakers wailed out, seeming to try to ‘set the mood’. Billy did not appreciate it.

“SHUT THE FUCK UP!” He whirled around and yelled at it.

“*THIS MUST BE LOVE!*” It yelled right back. Steve only looked at it with saucer wide eyes, song continuing to howl on.

“SEE?! THIS IS THE SHIT I’M DEALING WITH!” He shouted over the music, moving quickly away from Steve towards the car. His hands slipped inside, smacking at the steering column for his key.

Nothing.

The ignition was empty. Dustin probably had the key in his pocket or something, or it was buried somewhere inside of the car from him moving everything around.

“GREAT! THANK YOU, STUPID CAR!” Billy bitched, Steve still staring at him all stupefied. “NO FUCKING KEYS AND NOW YOU RUN TOO? REALLY?!” Billy carried on, hand smacking the dashboard. “*SHUT UP!*”

The radio promptly cut out, leaving only the engines pur.

“Well that's one half...” Billy sighed, shoulders slumping down as he shifted himself to fall into the cars seat, angling himself to hang out of the door towards Steve.

“It’s not Cher for once but - you get what I mean now?”

Steve nodded, eyes still huge as he looked over the car.

“And uh, how long has *this*, ” He gestured to the car, “been happening for?”

“Started after you and I went to find the kids. Hence why it makes *perfect* sense for you to be involved in this. Ever since that night now all it plays is Cher. It’s a rolling mobile hell of only Cher... and I guess now Whitesnake.”

Steve kept himself away from the car, backing a few feet as he looked it over, brown eyes flicking up and down the body, into the interior, trying to figure it out. Billy sat in the seat, too tired to be scared of his own car at this point. He just watched the other, pretending Steve’s eyes where the two brown marbles he’d rolled down his homemade matchbox track when he was a kid. Up and down they’d go, tumbling along at a flick of the chubby finger.

“Shit... Does it do anything else?” Steve broke out. The engine hummed, vibrating around Billy as the car warmed up.

“All it’s done is play the radio. Turning it up and down on the dial, ate my Iron Maiden tape, kept the radio playing without the keys.” He leaned back into the leather, sighing. “It’s never run by itself before.”

Steve settled himself back on the milkcrate, hands coming up his chest to his cheeks, massaging them and rubbing to ease the visible stress that coated his expression.

“I’ve got someone who can maybe help.”